

## PLANNING TOOLS AND URBAN MANAGEMENT. THE RESTRUCTURATION OF PUERTO NORTE IN ROSARIO, ARGENTINA.

Emiliano del Valle Güizzo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centro Universitario Rosario de Investigaciones Urbanas y Regionales / Facultad de Arquitectura, Planeamiento y Diseño / Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Argentina.  
arquivalle@hotmail.com

**ABSTRACT.** The article enables to recognize the guidelines of public policies that guided the process of urban restructuring of Puerto Norte, a port and railroad area located on the banks of Rosario's city. For this, the process of restructuring is analyzed, from the first ideas raised for the sector in the early 90s to the present. It will be analyzed the planning tools designed for their development and management as well as what was finally built and according with which modalities. For this, one of the real estates developed in this sector of Rosario's Central Coast will be described.

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### INTRODUCTION

Traditional downtowns reach an extension and an occupancy rate that, at some point, cease to be attractive to locate new activities, particularly tertiary. Rusk [1] says that old downtowns are not enough elastic to house large-scale interventions. Congestion in the central areas conducts a search for new places where tertiary activities, among others, can be developed more adequately. The so-called "new centralities" are emerging by promoting the development of directional centers reconverting obsolete and deteriorated areas of the city

Rosario doesn't have a very significant development of tertiary activities, neither his central area shows alarming signs of congestion, but, from the mid-nineties, a process of conversion of old port and railway areas is being carried along the central banks along Paraná River that is giving rise to a site that is considered as a "new centrality". The idea of transforming the railway and port areas begins in the Urban Plan of '67. The convenience of transfer the port to the south of the city is presented in the subsequent urban plans and with this the restructuring of the area of Puerto Norte. Thus the area of Puerto Norte became one of the places where greater expectation was placed because of its possibilities of transformation, a site that offered place to the "new issues" of the city. The shape of this "new centrality" just three kilometers from traditional downtown was given by a new urban park, a shopping center and a recent mall, offices and a large number of housing units, most of them residential enclaves or condominiums.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban studies in Latin America have not established a single term to define great urban projects (GPU). As Lungo [2] says, there is some consensus to define them as a public or private intervention of large-scale which can include from new residential and commercial housing complexes to the transformation of the historic center or the construction of transport infrastructures. In general, the bibliography on these issues focuses on the analysis of the projects, its gestation and its implementation. But the main interest is the involvement of the state with real estate developers, emphasizing the new way of management of urban spaces. Other studies search the effects of these megaprojects on its environs.

In this regard, Lungo [2] explains that this kind of projects become important and emblematic works in its integration with the city. But, at the same time large urban projects originate deep economic, cultural, environmental and urban impacts. Beatriz Cuenya [3] says that they produce at least three key changes in the city:

- in the physical-functional organization, they reproduce the conditions of urban centers but as exclusive sites;
- in the rents of land uses, they promote large valorization of the sites and their surrounding areas; and
- in public management mechanisms, the State is assuming a role of urban promoter that requires a new regulatory support.

In great urban projects the government also assumes a role of promoter, in many cases it is also the landowner and the product are buildings and equipment of different types, not differing from the products of a private entrepreneur, as Jaramillo [4] says.

Consequently, new policies with new planning tools (master and special plans) as well as management tools (surplus value capture, public - private agreements, etc.) are required.

The new planning regulations, with other broader logics such as globalization and technological development, among other issues, produce large functional and building changes in the current great metropolises quoted Borja and Castells [5]. These changes, adds Janoschka [6], tense the traditional center with the emerging new centers. As Beatriz Cuenya says, such new centralities are strategic places, usually relegated areas of city, newly designed by mega-operations of urban renovation of public initiative (buildings, infrastructure and high level amenities) for local users and also the international capital.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *The process*

The policies of the Rosario Urban Plan (1991) considered the need for urban restructuring the entire riverside, but keeping the port status of Puerto Norte sector. At the time, during the administration of socialist mayor H. Caballero (1989-1995), the Municipality of Rosario acquires an obsolete sector of the old harbor, in order to gain more public space along the central riverside. An international hotel (the city did not have one yet) was proposed to be built in this area, but this initiative did not prosper since no offer was submitted to the public tender,

In 1992, during the neoliberal crisis, the national government in accordance with the Economic Emergency Law decided to divest all public land unused. For it special mechanisms for passing these lands for free or onerous to municipalities were defined. The ownership of this land allowed the municipality to clear the place of all the old railroad installations and to build the first lane of a coastal avenue.

In 1995, the Mayor H. Binner seeks to realize the plan proposed in the sixties; thus, the recovery of the coast becomes a municipal state policy. After changing the port use, it starts the recovery of this sector, giving place to a long legal dispute with the owners of grain storages who resisting to be transferred to another place. About this initial moment of transformation of the central coast of Rosario, particularly at its north end, Beatriz Cuenya [3] says that: The policy implemented by the

National Government at the beginning of the nineties was directed to the sale and urbanize of all public land that were not included in the concession of railway and port services to private enterprises. The public land get by the Municipality became new parks for the city, while for the private land in the sector of Puerto Norte (grain exporters) the policy implemented by the socialist local authorities was aimed to develop private investments according to projects designed and managed by the Municipality. By that time there was a great interest of urban developers (local and international) to buy this land lobbying the local authorities for a profitable urban regulation.

During the last eighties also from academia were suggested some ideas for the development of Puerto Norte. In 1991, after the definitive decision to recovered that old port area to other uses, it was celebrated the International Seminar "Urban Projects for Puerto Norte". This activity was carried on jointly by the School of Architecture of the National University of Rosario and the Municipality of Rosario.

From 1991 to 2004 there was an important hiatus of time in the management and development of Puerto Norte area until the Justice recognized that the decision of the Municipality to move all port activities from this place was correct. At the beginning of 2004, the local authorities called a National Competition for ideas to develop Puerto Norte. The winner was Juan Munuce, an architect from Rosario. His project revealed the initial aspirations of the local government regarding Puerto Norte.

The winning project was the starting point for successive technical and political discussions about the area of intervention, which resulted in the reversal of the ideas awarded in the competition. These changes were taken into account in the by-laws which defined the zoning for the area and, later, with the project finally built. In this regard, Scarpacci [7] comments that: In the pass from ideas to facts, we find some changes that began to happen (coherency between project and building is lost). Sectoral pressures influenced on the management modality chosen by the Municipality (public - private partnership).

The same year (2004) according to suggested by the jury, the winner is hired by the Municipality, to further develop his proposal. At the same time, the Municipality called a real estate developer of a significant number of

investment projects in order to advise the Municipality to facilitate the development of the projects to be carried out in the area. The progress of the work done by Juan Munuce and the real estate consultant became the basis for defining the nature and scope of the definitive project that was established in a by-law of 2005.

Puerto Norte intervention is part of the second phase of a major scale intervention call "Urban Renewal Center Raul Scalabrini Ortiz". The transformation proposal for this one was structured in two phases, the first phase (old depots area) was established in 1996: shopping center (Shopping Alto Rosario) and green area (Scalabrini Ortiz Park), both of

them in land of the former national railway company. This land was sold for urban development.

The starting point of the release of land in Puerto Norte is the "Additional Agreement" signed between the Municipality of Rosario and a new National Railway Authority in early 1996. That year the national authorities decided to sell the land to private developers and the Municipality started with the urban project. It was approved the same year by the City Council the project and the agreement between the Municipality and the national government. With it the reconversion and urbanization of a big area of 133 hectares, free of railroad use.



Source: (Güizzo, 2016)

Figure 1: Second Phase of CRU Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz - Puerto Norte



Source: (Güizzo, 2016)

Figure 2: First Phase of CRU Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz – old depots area

### Management mode Puerto Norte

The Special Plan is defined as the technical tool used to program the physical and functional transformation proposed for a particular sector of the city, set of plots and public areas (streets, avenues, squares) detailing the particulars of the proposed configuration for the areas of public and private domain.

This tool applied in Puerto Norte is presented by the Municipality as a public policy of mixed management; policy that responds to the idea of an innovative and promoting state, a state that proposes new processes in the sense of transformation; a state that involves the participation of different actors as protagonists of the process. Different stages of agreements between public and private sectors are implemented in this management mode, allowing the articulation of different interests, undertaking joint actions in order to optimize processes and resources from the public sector and from the private sector. In accordance with this, Puerto Norte is one of the projects prioritized by the PUR (Rosario Urban Plan 2007-2017). The urban plan for Rosario 2007 – 2017 defines six central operations in order to promote the structural transformation of the city. Puerto Norte project got priority as one of the most important actions of the central operation “Urban Centralities”. Specific normative tools (Special Plans, Detail Plans, Heritage Preservation Areas), management tools for arrangement (Urban development agreements) and

instruments of redistribution of the benefits of urban development are considered by the Plan in this type of intervention.

The renewal of the sector was carried out by developing a strategy that allowed the articulation of instruments of technical and design order (urban project) with instruments of urban management, which after approval acquire legal effect: Special Plan and Detail plan.

The project is presented as a “special plan”. The whole area of Puerto Norte was divided in seven sectors called as “management units”. The definitive project for each one of the seven sectors is presented in “detail plans”. The seven “detail plans” are then submitted to be approved by the City Council. In the special plan the general structure of the sector is defined: streets and public spaces connecting the seven inner sectors (Management or execution Units). In the “detail plan” building regulations for each sector are established: height, built surface, land uses, protection of existing buildings. We can say that these seven “detail plans” respond to the need to shape the different interests among the involved actors, and also to the development time required by each area.

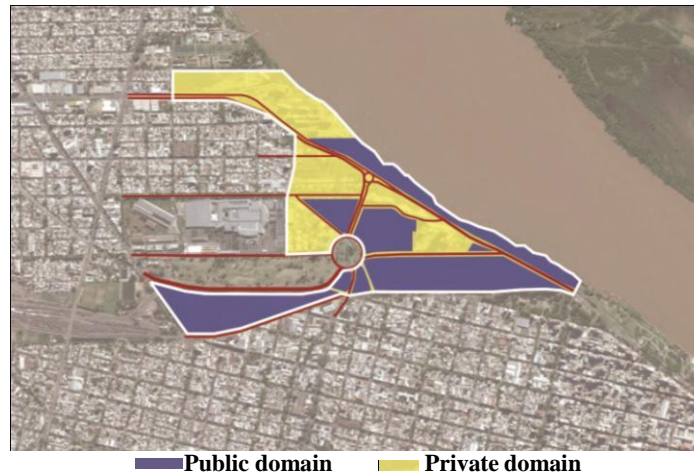
The Detail Plan, as defined by the ordinance, is a technical instrument whose purpose is to specify urban indicators for a block, parcel, set of parcels, special streets or classified as reserve areas sectors.



Source: (Güizzo, 2016)

Figure 3: Puerto Norte - Management Units

### Land ownership in Puerto Norte



Source: (Güizzo, 2016)  
Figure 4: Land ownership

The surface of Puerto Norte is 98 hectares, which belong as it was said to public and private domain. Old railway lands are the 65% (64 hectares) of public domain (ruled by the Railway Infrastructure National Authority). The remaining 35% (34 hectares) is of private domain (old industries and grain storages).

Land use in Puerto Norte was defined by the special plan as follows: the 47% (46 hectares) of the total area is destined to streets (10 hectares) and public spaces (36 hectares), of which thirty belonged to public domain and only six to the private domain.

If we refer to the Management Units of Puerto Norte, five units correspond to private owners and two belong to national government. Excluded the surface devoted to streets and public spaces, the remaining surface of the seven inner sectors are 52 hectares, from which 34 (represent 65% of the area) belonged to public domain (two sectors) and 18 (35% remaining) to private domain (five sectors).

#### **Detail Plan: the instrument and its relationship with developers**

Since its beginnings, Puerto Norte was presented by local authorities as a model for public - private agreement to develop urban projects. A model in which the role of the Municipality is to plan and design projects of public space and to manage the different interventions in the seven sectors. According with this, the Municipality (through its planning office) defines each one of the seven so called

“detail plans”. For the Municipality it is a private intervention mode where planning is public: the Municipality agrees with the developers what and how will be built in each one of the inner sectors. The results of these agreements are shown in each “detail plan”.

The detail plan allows the Municipality to calculate with accuracy the value of the whole intervention. This is an essential tool for the agreement with the real estate developers, mainly to calculate the public works that they will have to done. The Detail Plan is necessarily complemented with the Urban Development Agreement. This specific agreement is a kind of contract between the Municipality and other actors involved in the development of an urban area, and it is approved by the City Council. It is submitted with the detail plan. With this management way the Municipality is enabled to agree separately with each one of the developers or landowners about the project to be carried out in each sector.

The detail plan is a mechanism that does not respond to a single mode of management but is carried out according the interests and demands of different developers, considering the profitability of the projects to be done and the expected benefits. Thus, the autonomy of the Municipality is weakened and public - private management leads to the Municipality to think about the generation of rents in order to attract investments. According with the proceedings of one of the management units, sometime the Municipality gives in to the

pressure of real estate developers, acting from the logic of their demands of benefits, and

therefore enabling the breaching of certain rules.



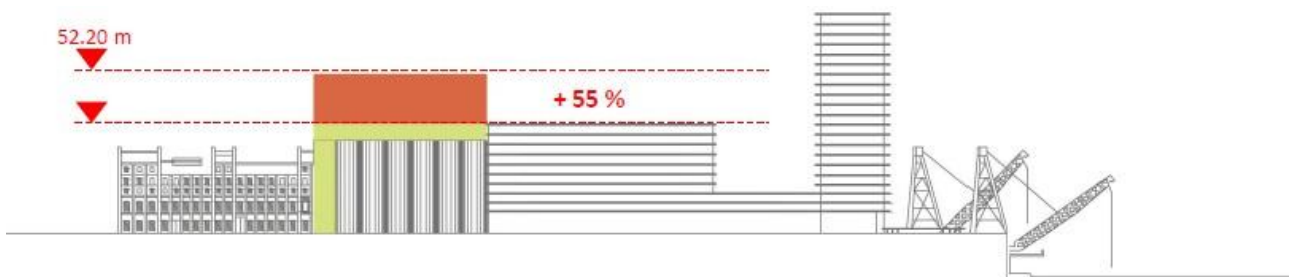
Source: (Güizzo, 2016)  
Figure 5: Management Unit 2.2 – Ciudad Ribera

The Detail Plan in question corresponds to the Management Unit 2.2, known as "Ciudad Ribera". This is an area of 2.3 hectares, whose owner was Agroexport S.A. and after new urban regulations were established it was sold to the Spanish developer Ingeconser. The detail plan for this sector (approved in 2008) define the street and public spaces layout, infrastructure to be built, building surfaces and protection of historical buildings. Almost 50.000 sq m. were authorized to be built.

But it was built more. In June 2013, city councilor A. Cortés complained that the developers were building more square meters that allowed in the hotel over the former grain

depot. The original plan proposed a hotel of 32 meters height, but when the building was finishing the height was 52 m (five more plants which, increasing 300% the built up surface).

In an interview with A. Cortes in June 2015 he said: *"The fact dates back to 2009, with absolute responsibility of the Municipality, who granted a building height of 44.4 meters high while the height allowed were 32 m. Finally in November 2012, the Mayor M. Fein sent a project to the Council to increase 62.5% the height of 44.4 m, reaching the 52 current meters". The argument was, as usual, "the surface allowed is not enough to grant investments in building a hotel".*



Source: (Güizzo, 2016)  
Figure 6: Urban Profile - height of the building over grain depots

## CONCLUSION

During the process of transformation of Puerto Norte it is possible to see that the proposed neutrality of planning tools (Special Plan, Plan Detail) begins to vanish when they are implemented

In the case of Puerto Norte, interests and demands of the private sector found a weak local government in its task of monitoring the

compliance of standards. The initial planning regulations changed due to pressure from real estate developers. The argument was to ensure the development of the project by generating an attractive income.

Thus, we can say that the interests of great developers shape the urban project in each of the inner sectors. The Municipality is not only

the promoter of this process of land valorization, but also its manager.

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